

Robert Curvin Interview
Interviewee: Maime Bridgeforth
Robert Curvin Robert Curvin
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Robert Curvin Professor Maime Bridgeforth, former member of the city council, civic leader and, Minister, community leader, passionate resident of Newark to talk to this morning. So, Maime I thought we would start by you just telling me about a little bit about where you grew up, and um were you born in Newark? how long you lived here and how you became engaged in civic activities?

Maime Bridgeforth: Okay. Well, I have lived in Newark for 46 years, I was raised in East Orange but I grew up along the border of East Orange and Newark which was on Stuyvesant Street. My involvement in Newark mainly came in the beginning because of my being a member of Mt. Sinai Baptist Church. At that time, Mt. Sinai Baptist church was located on Orange Street in Newark where you had the trolley cars coming pass. And um I would leave and come down to Newark, at that time, Orange Street flourished. You had the AMP, you had stores, and it was like a little tiny little shopping district. I was thirteen years old before I ever came to downtown, Newark because my family always thought that Newark really had all it needed right in those maple shopping centers so we would come to the AMP to shop, we would go to the stores, the bakery, the Roseville Bakery. I remember Zeeman's, we used to go to Zeeman's in order to get dresses and cherry shops and shoes. So, we really never had a reason to go downtown Newark because everything was right there on Roosevelt Avenue. And it was wonderful, you had NATS um stores. It was called NATS but it was an open air like little fresh vegetable stand and everything. So, this is where people came and because I was born in the South, South Carolina. Our people obviously cooked fresh vegetables and so forth and so on. And so, the only place that you could come get it that was in walking distance of where we lived at near the border was on Roosevelt Ave and Dari clean. I remember Dari clean and the Tivoli movie. You can come to the Tivoli movie, that was the first movie I ever went to was the Tivoli. So, that was my introduction to Newark, and of course my first introduction to urban renewal was because the church I was attending, that area the church was purchased by the city of Newark in the 1950's and land was secured for the church on 13th Street in Newark, so they tore the Mt. Sinai Baptist church down on orange street and was rebuilt over on 13th street where it stills seats till today and um...

Robert Curvin Where did you go to school?

Maime Bridgeforth: I went to school in East Orange High School and um it's kind of interesting because those of us that went to East orange High School at that time, East Orange High School was considered one of the best high schools in the entire country, and in fact I remembered the year I graduated, we received a letter from President Kennedy indicating that we had excelled so dramatically as an institution and he wanted to honor us. But it was so interesting that there was a little rivalry between Newark and East Orange particularly on Thanksgiving Day. I was a drum majorette, and our football team would always play Barringer High School. It was the "Thanksgiving competition." People came from miles around to see East Orange play Barringer High School. So, my introduction to Newark was in that vein and then of course my husband lived in Newark all his life. His family is from Newark, the Bridgeforth on South 12th street, the Bridgeforth family, the Mayo family, the Ashville family and then of course there was Dr. the Elborj family because he was on 14th street and Dr. Robert Spellman's father was on 14th Street. The Spellman's grew up in that area. So, there was some level of involvement back and forth in terms of my knowing Newark and then of course worshipping in the city of Newark.

Robert Curvin When did you start getting involved in community activities?

Maime Bridgeforth: Interesting enough, it was after I married. My husband and I moved to Newark. His parents owned a home in the Southward and we lived in the Southward for a very brief time and then we moved into the Westward. That's where we stayed basically until this day in different parts of the west. But I became mainly involved um I think um the first involvement was with Newark pre-school council. My daughter attended the Memorial Presbyterian pre-school over on 7th street and at that time, they were looking for someone to represent that particular parent council. And there was a criteria and I was the only parents that met the criteria because I was the only parent that had a High School Diploma. We were young parents but I was the only one that had a High School Diploma. So, they asked me if I would represent the kind of area board for the preschool, and I said yes and I started going to meetings at the Central office representing the memorial Presbyterian church.

Robert Curvin Was Becky running the pre-school council at that time

Maime Bridgeforth: Um, I think Becky was just coming in at that time, was just coming in at that time, and that's how I basically started becoming involved, but my first political involvement was when Kenneth Gibson was running for Mayor. I remember getting up that morning, earlier that month he held a meeting on the corner of South 6th Street and South Orange Avenue in the little store front. And I remember saying to my husband that oh the black guy is running for mayor; I saw a poster and he is coming down the street.

I will go down the street to the meeting. I went to the meeting and I must admit I was waiting for him to come in and he drives off in his checker because back in those days, he rode around in a checker. And I was less than impressed [laughs] as he stepped out of his checker saying my God, he gat to do better than this but I listened to, um he wasn't a great speaker but at that point my position was that I was going to vote for him no matter what because of course he was black and it was a feeling in the air that it was our time. And I remember the morning of the election, I got up at four o'clock and I told my husband, I said "I am going to work the election and I'm leaving the children with you" which I did and I remember that I went to the campaign headquarters and they said to me you are going to be stationed up at Barringer High School. Now, obviously I really didn't even know how to get to Barringer High School but I found my way over to Barringer High School. It was most probably the scariest event of my life. I was there and there was another young man there and we walked in. It was just anger, it was rage, people called us all kinds of terrible names. I mean it was just really really bad. When it was time for the polls to close, they didn't even want to give us the tallies or anything like that. We Eventually got it. But when we left Barringer and started walking down the streets, a crowd gathered behind us. And I will never forget the young man that I was walking with. He said to me "whatever you do, don't run" because I think that he knew that if we started running, that would [gestures with hands as if moving forward]. So, we kept walking and walking and walking, the crowd became a little bit more angry, a lot more hostile, by the time we got to the corner, God must have been watching out for us. Around the corner came a van with the orange and white balloons, and we know that they were friendly balloons because of the color's orange, white, black and they said to us, you people need a ride and we said yes and we jumped on the van and out of Northward. I mean they were yelling at us and all kinds of things. I wonder what would have happened to us if we really tried to get out of there because we didn't have a car. And I'll never forget, I remember we came, we turned the tallies in and they said we should go down to Robert Tree hotel. I'm sorry we should go to Symphony Hall and wait for the results. And you can feel something in the air, you can really feel something in the air. I remember seating and waiting on the floor, the place was packed and people started screaming and yelling and they said he won, he won. And I remembered when I came outside of symphony hall, it looked as if all of Newark had come downtown Newark. There were buses that had stopped, people got off the buses and climbed on top of the buses and they were dancing, and yelling and screaming. I don't know who this other person was but somebody managed to get all the way to the very top of City Hall and plant a Black liberation flag. I will remember that all the days of my life. I remember I got home at four o'clock the next morning because we just stood out on the streets. Nobody wanted to go home, nobody wanted to leave. It was such a tremendous

feeling and I remember that Kenneth Gibson spoke and you had this little Hispanic child and her father [unclear] and he held her up on his shoulder and I heard him say to her that's him, that's him look at him, that's him. I still get emotional when I think about it because that was a tremendous time in our history as a people. I remember he gave a speech and he said "there are a lot of you out here tonight, when you leave here, I don't want one piece of paper on the ground because it is going to be my responsibility to have to pick it up." And when all those thousands of people left downtown Newark, there was no paper on the ground. It was just a wonderful time.

Robert Curvin

Did you started working in the administration

Maime Bridgeforth:

Interesting enough now, I keep saying interesting because I look at how my life unfolds, I was working on my Master's degree at the time and I was at Rutgers and Simon Young Bey and John Laxford and I were at the Malcolm X library and I remember that John Laxford came up to me and he said what are you doing now that you graduate and I said I'm going to graduate school an he says but what you are going to do in the Summer. I said I don't know and he said why don't you take this and see they are looking for people to work in the urban institute. Richard Urban, I think was there and I went down to the Urban institute and I was hired briefly. I stayed around five minutes and then I was told the mayor of the city was going to send some college graduates over to the Board of Education because Charley LaBelle was going to be appointed as the head of the board and they thought that it would be a good thing if we had college students around him. So, Simon Young Bey, John Laxford and myself were told that we would be sent to Mayor Gibson. I remembered walking into his office and looking at Gibson looking at our resume. And he says I know you guys are with the Urban Institute, and we said yes. He says, I would like for you to leave there and go to the board of Education. We are going to be working with the new President of the Board of Education Charley Bell and that's what happened. So, I went over and I remember that my first responsibility was to help organize the search for the first Black Superintendent of schools and that where I met you because you were part of the committee and you had chaired the committee and Mrs. Folly Love who at that time was on that also. I remember reaching out to the various individuals that the board had indicated they wanted to interview. I remember talking to Barbara Zymore and several of the other black superintendent throughout the country who we thought would be interested in applying for the position, setting this all up. It was an interesting time and um Stanley Taylor became the first Black Superintendent of the Newark school system and I was intricately involved at the time in organizing that as a grad student. So, that's where I was involved with Newark in that regard. And so, I look at my life in Newark and it's as if a series of things started to culminate, looks like a

series of my life started forming a pathway and I was moved down at the same time I was becoming involved in ministry and working in the community. And just speaking up about things that I thought that we needed changes on.

Robert Curvin Let me just ask you about your reflection on the Gibson years. You were there at the beginning. After sixteen years, what were your feelings about him, his leadership, and the city?

Maime Bridgeforth: Well, it is interesting that you ask that because let me reflect it in this regard. Sharpe James and I were colleagues here at the college for many years. As interesting as it may be, I was his supervisor [laughs] as if anybody can supervise Sharpe James but I was his supervisor and he was a good teacher, and I remember um when Sharpe came in to see me and he said to me I am going to run for mayor and I said wow that such a good idea. I said because that way you can at least get your name out there because if you don't win this time, you can run the next time around. And he said to me, there will be not be a next time because of I don't win this time, I will not run again. He told me that sitting right in the same building we are seating now. And I say that in this respect it because given the time that we had Mayor Gibson in Newark we needed that and I think that given the hand that he was dealt, I think he did an incredible job because if we did not have his type of leadership, the city would not have survived.

Robert Curvin How would you describe his type of leadership?

Maime Bridgeforth: I think his leadership, he is an engineer by profession. And his type of leadership is very focused on the things he could get done and the way he put the pieces together. I think that his engineering training helped him to do that. I think he was very clinical in how he addresses things and I don't believe that he was a very emotional, passionate, type of leader in the way he addresses things. I think that his clam approach to running the city was necessary at the time when we had so many people who were leaving the city because they were scared of black leadership and I believe he gave a picture of stability. Could he have been more passionate? Could he press forward? I'm a firm believer, and this is just the Spiritual side of me. I think that God places leaders that have qualities that are needed for the times in which they lived. And I think that given the times in which he lead, in order to keep people from believing that this city was a bastran of radical black nationalism the city, all of that kind of things, which I think would have totally killed the future of the city. I think his leadership allowed people to understand that yes, the city has been through tremendous times but that this city can come back. I believe that his leadership gave people the confidence that maybe at the time they wouldn't see it but if we could survive those eight nine or ten, twelve years, then the fear of a black Newark would begin to abate and maybe the

corporate community would begin to see beyond that and say let's go back to believe that there is a Newark that we could go back to. I believe his personality provided that kind of leadership. I think his personality construct as a lowkey kind of individual was necessary during that time. Because they were many voices shouting all over. Everybody was shouting at everybody else. Even, I was shouting and I had my biggest afro in the world. But um in the middle of all the shouting, I mean you gotta think beyond that and I think his leadership provided that. But I do believe that after sixteen years, it was time for a change. You can feel that in the air. I remember Dan Flarity who was one of Mayor Gibson major supporters working with the supporters came to my house and said that we understand that you would be supporting Sharpe James and I said to him that was interesting because I am not supporting anybody at this time. I haven't given it any thought. Well, if that be the case, we would ask you if you will you support Meyer Gibson. I sat there and I said "Dan, I think Myer Gibson has done a wonderful task and he will always be my mayor because I don't think I would be where I am without working for him. But honestly, he is not going to Sharpe James" and he looked at me and he said Well we are definitely going to beat him and I said no, you are not because there is a different feeling in the air and on the streets and I said he is going to lose. I mean I was right; you could feel it and I am saying that I just, maybe everybody is not like that or it was just me but I could feel things and I just felt that he wasn't going to win because I felt that it was his time was over and the city was moving into a different type of leadership. I think the city - you need a very large vision and you need a larger-than-life personality construction to make that vision a reality. So, in other words if I had to characterize Mayor Gibson leadership, I would say that he was a good stable journey to lay the firm foundation but you now have to convince those that would doubt us that we are the best thing in town and that takes a different type of personality.

Robert Curvin

Do you think Sharpe James qualified for that personality?

Maime Bridgeforth:

Yeah, he did only because of the kind of personality that he had. I will tell you the type of personality that he had an example of something that happened to me. As his Supervisor, I had to make determination on whether or not a person is entitled to be promoted. He put in his application to be promoted. But after I did his assessment, I really could not in clear conscience recommend a promotion and I sat down and explained why I couldn't recommend his promotion and I outlined some things that I thought he needed to do so that because if he was wanted to apply, he would have a better opportunity because I recognize that if he was going to be promoted, he would have to complete college wide and I knew some of the superstars, if you will who were going to be up against me. As a supervisor, I'm not going to send anybody through that I know did not have a real good chance at it, you know call it my ego if you will.

So, he sat there, he listened and said Professor Bridgeforth, thank you for everything. So, he left. One week later, I get a phone call from him and he says well, I am going to be on Bernice Pass show. Well, he was always on Bernice Pass show every week. So, I said, oh I see and he says perhaps you might want to tune in and he said there might be some very important message, so I said oh fine and I tuned in. there he was at the Bernice Pass show lambasting me, after his stellar performance as a faculty member, after his unparoled student evaluations, after his stellar performance, Professor Maime Bridgeforth did not think I deserved to be promoted and he went on and on and laid down all of the reasons why my entire assessment of him was whack. After an hour of this, he would call me up on the phone and he said are you listening to what is going on the radio and said are you listen to what his being said on the radio, did you hear what is said about you [laughs]. He then calls me up after the programmer is over and I said hello, he said this is Sharpe James, I said yes, Professor James, I got you good didn't I hahaha [mimics laughter] then he hangs on the phone. Why do I say this, my point is that that's the kind of personality I am talking about that stood up and said to people making fun of Newark, guess what we are the best thing since life spread, you gotta get on this train you are missing something great? I think there was a kind of personality to do that and Newark needed that, Newark needed that desperately because there was a scripture and it says that faith is the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen and there is another scripture that says life and death are in the power of the tongue and other words from spiritual perspective. What that means is that you have to believe that something exists and acts as it exists before it come to pass before it even come to pass at all and that was the kind of leadership he provided. He certainly believed that if he said something, long enough, hard enough about Newark that they would believe it. There were times in all honesty I would hear Sharpe James and this is before I became involved in politics. I would hear him say things about Newark that was so wonderful and I said to my husband that I don't know what planet this man lives on because that was not the Newark I see. But that was the key, I couldn't see that Newark, but he could, and because he saw, make it happen.

Robert Curvin

It's an interesting story which I don't recall remember that I don't recall that I listened to Bernice a lot, but I listen to the great philosopher [unclear]. In a way it raises another question about Sharpe James and I wonder if there is another side or another lesson at the same time that um this is someone who really may act alone and feel so enthusiastic about his own opinion which may not be well vested that he would go out an act publicly on the basis of that.

Maime Bridgeforth:

I think that I would call it in many ways a lack of wisdom. I believe there were many instances that he did not display the level of wisdom that I

believed that he could. I would give you a classic example, I can understand why he wanted to be a state senator. Because I think that he understood that by being a state senator, he could have an enormous impact on the things that flowed to Newark or the benefit that Newark could have. But in terms of wisdom and in understanding of the power structure of the state of New Jersey, but wisdom in terms of his relationship with his political enemies. I don't necessarily think that becoming a senator was necessarily wisdom and I don't think that helped him and I think that contributed to his political demise. You have to understand some level some level of wisdom, some level of high assessment of how the power structure you can handle. Let's be frank, you couldn't get elected the dog catcher if you didn't come through Newark that's real. You have to have the Newark political machine to let the Newark vote if you were going to become governor or a congressional or be in a legislative position which meant that the only political machine you have is the James machine and that's too much power. I believe that Malcolm says that too much power and I mean too much power in terms of the political structure looks at a black man and I think in all honesty that sometimes when you have that much power in your disposal you do have to exercise some wisdom in your assessment of how you perceive your political enemies if you will and how they look at you.

Robert Curvin

You are saying that you reach so far to a point where he endangered his own political career

Maime Bridgeforth:

I think he did and I think he endangered his own political stability. I sat in a meeting and I will not mention the names of this people because this is going to be on the air. But I sat in a meeting with some very high-level government officials and several other members of the council in relationship to something that was extremely unpopular that they did not want the city of Newark to have but we felt we were going to have it and we were in a kind of tremendous and some funding that relates to the arena and you have an idea who this people are. I remember that we had the meeting in West Orange and they made it clear that we would not be supportive of us in getting the necessary funding in order to get the arena. I remember Sharpe was seating at the table and these gentlemen were all round. He sat there very quiet and he listened to them. I spend a lot of time; you know as a social worker you learn how to read paralinguistic ques and body language. So, I was watching these gentlemen the amount of vehement, rage that they had towards him was absolutely unparallel. They were absolutely furious that he had forced them into this position but he sat and listened as they played the games but the bottom line is that they were denying that they were stopping the money from coming in which we all knew. So, he sat down and said that in other words let me ask you a question are you going to help receive this money or not. And they basically tell him no and I remember him seating there and said fine, we

certainly understand that and we respect your position that and I know that you will respect Newark's position, we are closed and he got up and he walked out the door. We did get halfway out of the room before the high-level people called us back and made it clear that they would do heaven and earth to make sure the funding came. And we got the money.

Robert Curvin You see Sharpe told me this story in another way. I don't know if I told you that I wrote to him, you know about the arena and the governor was in the room and he actually credits you for making the dramatic statement

Maime Bridgeforth: Oh, he did [laughs] about my grandmother?

Robert Curvin yeah, about your grandmother said that you cannot piss in our faces and call it rain

Maime Bridgeforth: I did say that even the Reverend Maime Bridgeforth had this to say. I am not very good with hypocrite and he was better with hypocrite than I was. I think I just became so enraged that this people were not giving us the money that was for the citizens of Newark money should not be forthcoming. Not because this people did not believe in the arena but this very same people that's stood against the arena, all they now have talk about how great the arena was. So, the issue was not the arena, as far as I was concerned, the issue was they wanted to call the shots on whether it should be in Newark and under whose watch it should come. I considered that was arrogant and also somehow there was the view that we didn't have the kind of intellectual capabilities as leaders of the city to handle the development of something this major. And I found that to be an insult. So, I did say to them and I made it very clear and said to them, you know I'm going to be very frank with you. I have listened to what you are saying and I think it is very hypocritical and hear them said what you said but I do know that hopefully you understand what our position is and you understand what our position is and they closed the ground by the time, we were ready to walk out and they brought us back. But I saw the anger, I saw the rage that was the first time I saw it. The second time I saw it was when Cozan was running for governor. Now we need to understand the political reality and I say it to anybody because it's true. Cozan would never have been senator if it had not been for Sharpe James. I remember the day that Sharpe James brought Cozan into his hotel in Newark. I walked into the Robert Tree hotel in Newark and all I can see all of this Cozan materials on his table. I clearly didn't know who he basically was. Well, that's not really accurate I had met him a few weeks earlier but I clearly did not know who he was. And um Sharpe was walking from table to table and he was saying you know this is John Cozan and this is your next senator. I remember there was a senior citizen seating next to me, she looked at the literature and looked at this man, and she put it down and she said you know who that is? I said no that I had met him a weeks earlier but

I don't know who he is. And she said I don't know who that is but if Sharpe says vote for him, then I gotta vote for him, I'll vote for you and that's the honest truth and the ballroom was packed at Robert Tree Hotel. He took him from table to table. Now fast forward, he is running for governor, he did not want to have any relationship with Sharpe that may have been because the underlying business of indictment was coming down the road. I guess that I am not a good politician because I have always felt you don't need your friends when you are up, you need your friends when you are down. I'm just like that, I guess that's just my personality construction. So, I found it very interesting that when Cozan was running for governor, he did not have any campaign open headquarters in Newark, he did not have any billboards in Newark, it was as though he did not exist. Then all of a sudden as we started getting down to the closing weeks of the race, the race started to tighten and his lists started to dwindle and dwindle and dwindle. One particular night, Desi Walker was having a fundraiser at the Robert Tree, and I went to her fundraiser and then the mayor came a little later on, and He started walking round the room and saying to different council people, we gotta be upstairs at 11 o'clock in the Governor's suite. Cozan is coming into Newark, saying he wants to talk to the people of Newark leadership

Robert Curvin

So, this is Mayor Baraka?

Maime Bridgeforth:

No, this is when Sharpe was still mayor and Cozan was running after spending all of his time trying to not interact with Newark at all, he was going to win the election absent of Sharpe James. As a Newarker, my feelings were, okay if you got a issue with the mayor, you got a issue with the mayor but if you want to get elected as a Newarker you want to tell me that you are running for governor and you won't make a pit stop in Newark, this wasn't right. So, we go upstairs and sure enough here comes Cozan, oh! He gives a glorious speech about how wonderful Sharpe is, and that Sharpe leadership is fantastic, how he loves the citizens of Newark. In that meeting, you had council persons, you know very political people of Newark and community people who are about 75 or 80 were packed in there. And he is talking and talking and Sharpe says we gat to get out, we gat to get out and vote, we only have a few more days left, we cannot let Republicans win this, I'm calling on everybody to put our differences aside and lets just get behind this man. I was absolutely stunned. I was seating there looking at a man who has stomped his nose at Newark for the entire campaign. Now, because your numbers are dwindling, you want Newark and you are going to come here and we are going to do this. I was not happy about this; I mean I just felt it was the height of hypocrisy on Cozan's part. So, afterwards, things settle down and he left, Sharpe was seating in of those [unclear] talking to people, so I went and said can I see you for a moment. He said what is it? I said let me ask you a question, this man has ignored the city of Newark for his entire

campaign, he has treated us as if we don't exist and now you are asking us to mount an enormous effort to get him elected and I said what is the matter with you? This people don't like you, what is wrong with you? And he just simply said to me there are times to fight battles and right now the bigger battle is to we got to get the democrat out in Trenton and the other stuff we would fight afterwards. The next morning, John Whitlow referenced this in her article she said "You went to sleep and there is nothing to be seen of Cozan at all, you woke up this morning and you were in Cozan land. Word had gone out and every major city, I think that whoever Sharp people, whoever they got, they must have worked 24 hours all night long because you go down to every major city, Elizabeth Ave, South Orange Ave, Central Ave and there was Cozan's signs everywhere and I said that to hearken back to my point that I don't think that Sharpe understood that the power he had that if you gonna [unclear] let there was something that this people liked and your point about him acting alone or being so flashy, flashy up in your face this kind of thing is not always wisdom. It helped a lot to happen to Newark because I think that when we wanted to build the NJPAC, if you remember in the very beginning, people were scoffing, laughing in your face. His capacity to take them on by saying you know its best in being in Newark because Newark has all these kinds of things going for and being relentless in their faces that if you take it away from us, you're taking it away from us because you know you are just downright racist. You are not taking away from us because you don't know what's the best place to be. So, I think those kinds of personalities construction help bring an NJPAC. He was a fighter but I think that wisdom, maybe it was ego, whatever it was. I don't think he understood just how much they hated him, and believe me, you seat in the room with those people and you knew they hated him.

Robert Curvin

What about integrity?

Maime Bridgeforth:

Yeah, in all honesty, that's the hard one to talk about um integrity. Let's look at it. First of all, let me just say this. I don't think there's ever a reason for people doing what's wrong, I just don't. I mean but people do and I'm not perfect. I have done things in my life that's wrong and I think we all do. But I think if you go back in all honesty and look at why you did what you did, you can find a rational reason it, you might lie to yourself and but ultimately you did it because it's what you wanted to do even though you knew it was wrong. So, I don't excuse anything he may have done that smacked of a lack of integrity. But I do believe in a balance and I think you have to balance a person's life out. And I think that history will show his flaws were his flaws. But I think that history will also show that the man was a visionary and he was a visionary that this city needed and I don't think that you can undo his contributions based on the fact that this integrity issues existed. And that's some of the concerns that I have when I see some of the things happening in the city of Newark. There is

almost a removal to act as if nothing existed until the current situation and that's not true. You know there's another biblical scripture that says, one plants, one waters, and God gives increase so my position is Kenneth Gibson planted, Sharpe watered and now Cory should be giving increase and you have to recognize that is the process throughout all of life. So, I don't think you could minimize Sharpe's contribution but do I think that he shouldn't have done something that might have brought his whole legacy into question? I think that was very foolish.

Robert Curvin

You know, interestingly at the sentence hearing, the judge agreed with you entirely and that was quite interesting to read the transference of where he stops the prosecutor and the prosecutor is asking, they are asking for a lot. They wanted to put him away for 30, 25 years and the judge stops the prosecutor and the judge says in to the prosecutor who is actually an assistant professor, assistant U.S attorney. "How can you justify asking for that kind of sentence" and she said something to the effect of that the historians would say well there was a history and before she could even get anything out of her mouth, he stops her and says you have not tried anything about a history and he goes on to say I have been driving into Newark about 20 years, this is the trash glory stop. I remember when I saw north ball park and I saw no park, I saw no this, no that and you are going to telling me that this man should just be judged on this one thing?

Maime Bridgeforth:

But you have to ask yourself why was the prosecutor pushing in that direction. I don't have any evidence obviously but will say whatever I want, I really think that this had a lot more to do with this desire on the part of powers that be to say that Newark didn't have anything till this present change. I really mean it. I even looked at the press coverage. The Newark Municipal Council when I was on it from 98-2005, the council could do nothing right, I mean if it matters there were reporters who were assigned exclusively to the council. I think we had Nikita Stewart, Jeffrey Maze, one of the gentlemen, two of the billboards and it was another, their work, there was another gentleman a black fellow. Then they moved him over to the business area but my point is that their sole task was to come and cover the council meetings and after council meeting, they kept quiet. When the council sneeze, they will be a big headline-the council sneeze as though we were infecting the whole world. My point is that when I look now, I don't see any coverage of the Municipal Council and that's, you have to ask yourself it's still a governing body why isn't there no coverage. Under the old council it was as if the council needed to be targeted for whatever reason. Now, I am not saying this because the press gave me a hard time because in all honesty, they were quite generous towards me. It was an observation that I saw that how come I don't see that now. I am just saying this that why is it not happening now and I think that in all honesty it goes back to the whole censor issue. I am not a conspiracy theorist but I do believe that there are powers that have

invested in a society and are skewing things in the system. I do think that this was part of this overall whole movement to remove the contributions that came enduring this era, I really believe that. Um, so no could I have beaten Sharpe after death about falling into this trap, absolutely. I think that number one, I think he stayed too long. You know my mum always tell me that a leader is like a lady, she always knows when to leave the dance and I think he stayed way too long that's the first thing. And I think the longer you stay in politics the more inclined you are to fall into traps. Call it the invisibility syndrome, call it the power of people surroundings you who won't tell you the truth. And I will say in all honesty with Sharpe I've heard occasions when I would go down to his office and shut the door, and I would say something's to him that I would not say publicly. And I remember once he stopped speaking to me for six months because of something that I said to him, but I always felt you tell people the truth whether they want to hear it or not. And I think that there were not a lot of people around him who told him the truth like any leader who stays too long. But I was very annoyed that he let himself to fall into this kind of a trap because when you look at this, this was really- if it had happened anybody other than him, would they have even gone this distance? I don't know but I do think that as a leader of his people, he needed to say that you know what I'm going to make sure that if I fall, it wouldn't be because I did anything and I just think that he just made a terrible mistake.

Robert Curvin Don't you feel that or do you feel as I do, I have to be very honest giving our history in this country if we have the opportunity to gain even a morsel of doubt that we have a very special obligation to be careful, have some degree of vision and to deliver?

Maime Bridgeforth: Absolutely, what we have to understand is that we have to be past Caesar's wives, we gotta be beyond reproach, we gotta walk on water, we gotta raise the dead and we have to do it all with a smile because we know that they are going to be after us alright and not only are they going to be after us, we also have to know that our people, we are a leader-centered people. You know leadership in the African American community is not diffused leadership. We tend to gravitate around a central person as a leader and I think that's a weakness that we have in our community that we have to begin to address. And so, as a result of that when you become a leader, people depend on you and because you know that yes you have to deliver, and you have to not do what everyone else does right, you have to have some type of internal compass that keeps you focused on what you have to deliver for your people and whatever it takes to have you do that, you have to do that and so therefore, the little exceptions and perks that maybe other folks can enjoy, you cannot do it because when you fall other people fall and I think that what's stressing me about where we are as a people. Now, I don't personally think we have a lot of grassroot leadership

in our community because I don't think anybody at this point have been able to galvanize that leadership. It is almost as if there is an um, there is no emotional connections. Newark has always been a town of emotional connections. People in Newark feel things strongly and you follow your leaders out of feelings. There were some people that were in office that people voted for them maybe not because they were doing a great job, they just felt emotionally connected with those people. And I think that is something about the people of Newark. Newark, we are very procio, Newark is large town but we are a very procio town and as such people invest emotionally, make decision about who they were going to support in leadership based on emotions. So, knowing that as a leader you have a tremendous responsibility to do much much better.

Robert Curvin So, let me shift a minute because this is very very helpful

Maime Bridgeforth: Okay, I hope so [smiles]

Robert Curvin Absolutely. More than that it is very wonderful to hear you talk about these things. But I want to spend a little time hearing you talk about the council. Newark city council, one of the highest paid city council in the country, one of the most generously staffed, one of the most highly perked councils in the country. Is it justified? Is the council really a full-time job or a part-time job?

Maime Bridgeforth: Now, I will be very frank with you. The council is more than a full-time job depending on who the council person is. It can be a part time job or it can be a full-time job if you are really going to do the job and it depends on what each council person interprets what they feel their responsibilities are. For example, I was the councilwoman for westward for two terms. I remember when I won the election and I came to see Mr. Morosco who was the clerk, I remember I smiled when I think incredibly naïve I was. I'm not a spring chicken. I mean I was in my 50's before I ran for council so being a professor and all you kind of know things. So, you know, I went in and I said to him. I said to him and I said can I kept the copy of the manual? and he looked at me and he said the manual and I said yes, you know the manual regarding my duties and um. The manual, he said to me there is no manual and I said there is no manual, oh how I'm I supposed to know what I am supposed to do in terms of the offices and this and that and whatever. And he says, "well, most of the council people kind of make their direction in terms on where they are going." there was no manual in terms of what I could and could not do under the law and so forth and so on. No manual. So, all I knew was that I had five people that I can hire, and these were the dates when the council met and they introduced me to Mr. Caldwell who was a godsent because he was the assistant clerk at the time. And he came in and gave me basic introductions and so forth. So that was my first introduction that you

know, I make this myself. I then was asked, I will never forget someone came in and they wanted to know, did I want to have cable in my office, and I said cable, why would I need cable in the office and they said you know you don't have to have cable we just wanted to know if you wanted to have cable in your office. And I said Well no and then the gentleman said the only reason you might want to have it is in any event that something major happens, maybe the military, nationally or something like that, as a council person you might want to know that it happened, so I said to him in all honesty does anybody else have cable and he said yes. And I said perhaps if something else happens I can go next door to the other council person's office and I'll be able to see what happens but I won't be needing any cable. There came a car they wanted my driver's license so we could fill out for a car, and I said a car? They said yes, that I have been assigned a car for me to drive. Then I told them but I already have a car, so I never drove the city cars. So do I think we need city cars, no do I think we need cable in our offices, no so I was able to turn that down because I didn't think I need it but did I think you need a staff-a five people to be a council person in Newark if you are going to do your job in Newark, yes. In Westward Newark, we had 50,000 citizens and let me tell you something. The people in Newark at least in my experience do not view an elected official as a legislator, they view an elected official as a jack of all trades. I have senior citizens who would call me because they did not know how to fill out PAAD forms and they will want to meet the council person, to come to my office in order for me to show them how to fill it out or come to my house to fill it out. I had people who had relatives who would die, who did not have the money to bury their relatives, they would call because of those kinds of things. I mean the kinds of calls that I received 90% of them had nothing to do with my legislative duties. It had to do with the life needs of people, and as a council person..

Robert Curvin Isn't there a social service system?

Maime Birdgeforth: There is a social service system but you have to understand that the people of Newark see their elected officials as the frontline connection to the social service system. Look at the council meeting, 90% of what people come to the council with have nothing to do with the council. The kind of complaints that they have are things that are in the preview of the administration but they would lambast the council and they would do all of these things about things that you have absolutely no control about. They would complain about the school system, they might complain about federal kinds of issues, people in our community have no real understanding of the delineation between the powers within the system, and so if they have a problem with the Federal government and taxes, they would come to the council, and so when you say do you really need all those aids. Trust me I can show you piles and piles of messages, because one of these days hopefully I will write a book. I used to have what is

called hot sheets, and I will say to people in my community if there is any illegal activity going on in your community, fill out a hot sheet and mail it to me. They would mail the hot sheets and I will pass them on to the police department, there would be instances where I would have my aid Louis [] who was my chief of staff at the time no one ever had a chief of staff, but my people worked from 8:30 and in the morning till 8 or 9 o'clock at night. Many of the people on other council staffs had other jobs. My people didn't have another job, their first responsibility was to the citizens of Newark, and if you went to the west ward office, we were open all day. My people had responsibilities, you know Louise handled most of constituent services and that's what we were about constituent services. If you were going to do your job in that way, no one council person can do it with 50, 000 people, but there's nothing written that requires you to do your job that way.

Robert Curvin So, a council person in addition to being the full-time council person, I can also have other jobs or two other jobs?

Maime Bridgeforth: You can have another job; I kept my job as a professor here at the college but I can guarantee you that my job working as a council person and I'm not be self-serving. I think anybody who knows my leadership will tell you. People called me at ten o'clock at night, my personal phone number was on every piece of literature that ever went out of the office. I can tell you for a fact. There were two instances in particular as an example of the fact that the council's office was not part-time. I was not in the office for three weeks when we had a horrific fire take place in the west ward of Newark and um two children were killed. When those two children were killed, the parents had nothing and um the mother, she I guess the horror of it was such that she didn't really understand what had happen, and they were going to cremate those children and I remember I um went to the location of course where the fire happened whatever and with the mother and um she didn't have a lot of family and I found out that she were going to have the children cremated and I went to the funeral home to ask why she would have them cremated. And they said because she had no money and I said Well, just stop everything because I knew that if she had those children cremated, that woman would have had such a major breakdown after this, I don't think she would have ever recovered. Our office organized the funeral. I took her to buy the clothes and I remember that when we left one of the places, she saw a little white hat and she said can I get that little hat for my son and I said sweetheart you can buy whatever you want for your children, this is the last thing you can do for them. And we did the funeral and we buried her children and we worked with her afterwards. Louise is a social worker, I'm a social worker So, we bought social worker and the members of our staff were people that had helping credentials. So, my point was that um that was not something that was a part time and people said that was just one incident, no it wasn't and it was

consistently for eight years that we ran that kind of an office. The only time people in my community couldn't contact me or a member of my staff was on Sunday. And I made it very clear to them that I am a Pastor, Sunday I preach, Sunday is the day that I do this and I ask you to respect that. It is a job, if you're doing it that goes beyond when you come into a council and there's nothing that says you have to do these things. Sometimes, people may feel that this is not what they should do but I felt that it is what our office should do because that's what the people of this community need and that is what they expect from their leadership. I can tell you that one lady called me late at night because she was having a problem with her daughter. Her daughter stayed out real late at night and they got into a fisting cuffing and the daughter sprayed some roach spray on the mother and she calls me at 3 o'clock in the morning. I am very serious. It got so bad until that my husband said I will sleep on the left side of the bed and you sleep near the phone because when the phone would go up at two o'clock in the morning, he will pick it up and says [gestures with hands] here are your people, but I don't think um when people say that you have all this perks, yes, we have all this perks. Do I think they are necessary, no. I don't think a council person needs a car, I never had a car? Five members of the staff, if you're doing your job right, yes, with 50, 000 people and if you got 6 meeting going on your ward one on night. I made sure that there was a representative from my office at every meeting that I couldn't be at while I was at a meeting and that was mandatory for people to work for me and they will tell, they worked all the time, nobody of had a part time job.

Robert Curvin

When you talk about council-mayor dynamics and first of all the other members of the council, how do you bring this diverse, scattered body of all the representatives of the city to some unified consensus on decision making?

Maime Bridgefopth: It appeared that I attended there was a issue about budget because it appears that council woman Chaneyfield Jenkins chairing the first night committee, and this was the first time that we had first night in Newark and she had a budget about the event and it seems that questions were being raised about the fact that the budget that she had for the event was running wild. So, I came to my first meeting and they were all talking about it, the press was there and there were a whole lot of confusion. And I'm listening to the responses about the money and I raised a question and I said, you know I'm a listen confused about something, how much is being allocated for the event and they indicated what it was. I said Well, if you have x amount of dollars allocated for the event then it would appear to me that each and every time you enter into a contract with someone that you should deduct that from your overall budget and if you're doing that, then how is it possible that you've gone over the budget for the event. Well, my asking that question put me in a position where Gayle and I for a

while were not to warm... Well, I thought that was you do in a council meeting and it seemed very logical to me. If someone gives you forty thousand dollars that you deduct as you enter contract so how could you possibly go overboard. I learned very early on that sometimes you have to be cognizant on when you ask questions. Also, I found.. oh certainly, well that did not stop me from asking questions. I learned that if you come in naive, you say oh this is the question and this is a logical question and everybody is interested in the question, interested in the thought process

Robert Curvin

Well, it appeared that you are doing your job [laughs]

Maime Bridgeforth:

But my point is that what I learned is that sometime being a council member doing your job sometimes brought you into conflict with your pairs, then there is people's assessment of you. Bessy Walker and I started out on a every rocky relationship, a very very rocky relationship. And I could never understand why and after a while I began to find out that Bessy had a view of me that I never knew that she had. She thought I was a snob because of my background and I didn't know she thought I was a snob. After a while we had a strain there for a while but I think we got past that and were able to forge a working relationship. But um the council is made up of very strong opinionated people and I think that it takes strong opinionated people to make up the council, you got to be opinionated and be a fighter. Their styles may be very different like my style wasn't Bessy style but I am just as strong, just as opinionated and dogmatic in what it is I am going for. And I am just as capable of playing hard balls at somebody else. It's just I play it with the silk glove [laughs]. So you got those real strong people, anytime you get those types of people all in one place, the issue becomes then how do you find common ground and I think that for the period of time that I was in the council, I can honestly say that the common ground was that everybody in that council loved Newark. They might have different in what they thought the approach was in dealing with the issues of Newark but they all loved Newark. Donald Tucker, I don't think anybody more opinionated and stronger than Donald Tucker. In fact, everybody told me when I got elected into the city council that we don't know how you will be able to work on the council with Donald Tucker. And I said, why? And they said you know because you are a minister Oh that man will curse you out, he doesn't care. And I remember that I said to someone that oh no he won't, I said he will not curse me out. I remember we were at a meeting very early on and um he and I were having an exchange about an issue because I was in disagreement and of course I was a new kid on the block, how dare you disagree me and I'm the dean of the council. And I'm continuing at it and finally he rears his chair back and he is getting ready to let loose and I said to him, I said Mr. Tucker, let me tell you something I respect you but let me help you understand something guess what you will respect me and I said I'm extra-

ordinary serious yeah you will respect me. Donald Tucker never cursed me out, never.

Robert Curvin Sharpe in his response to me is sixty pages long

Maime Bridgeforth: [laughs] That's sound like it

Robert Curvin of his written responses. Some of it particularly took a lot of time to attack Donald Tucker. What was going on there?

Maime Bridgeforth: Well, he and Donald Tucker always. He and Donald Tucker had tremendous differences that predated my involvement on the council and I think that a lot of what went on between Sharpe and Donald Tucker may have gone back to when they were young men just coming up in the whole Anti-Poverty movement. I think a lot of those seeds were planted then and um, I was never able to get my hand on why they disliked each other. Now, they respected each other but they disliked each other. I remember once Donald Tucker told me, he says "that Sharpe James, I hate him, I hate him" [laughs]. I mean, you know and one time I'll never forget, I remember this happens, you know this are things you see and you experience, we were in a council meeting and someone came and whispered to Mr. Morosco, and Mr. Morosco said, excuse me council men, I would like to know if I can get your social security numbers because President Clinton is going to be here in Newark within the next hour and we would like to get you cleared [laughs] so that you can meet the President and Bessy went ballistic, she says, "this is what I'm talking about your office, those people are very incompetent. Why are you just asking us for this now?" and of course Mr. Morosco says, "councilwoman we just found out now." So, Sharpe was going to keep this all to himself so he would have the whole glory of being there and meeting the mayor. So, of course by the time they pile us in vans and rush out to the airport. We went to the waiting area and the mayor was there reading his newspaper, so he looks up, he looks at Donald Tucker, he looks at the council people, he looks at everybody and he keeps reading his paper. Short time afterwards, the other dignitaries and corporate people come in, the mayor jumps up and shakes their hands. So, Donald Tucker says, "now you know why I hate this, he doesn't even talk to us but he goes and speaks to them gross [gestures hand]." I mean it was just these kinds of thing between them but interesting enough, they always ran on the ticket together. Every time, they ran on the ticket together, I remember I asked Donald Tucker about that, I said, "if you and Sharpe hate each other, how come you always run on the ticket together?" Then Donald said to me, he said look, if he wants to put my money on his literature and spend money to have it printed on there, that's his business I don't care. You know I can beat Sharpe James's butt you understand me and I mean this would be his kinds of things, but the genesis of this goes back to where they were young men and I know

that somewhere along the line there was some sense of betrayal that either one of them felt. He didn't want to be mayor but I think that somewhere along the line I know for a fact that I was in a meeting along before I ever became elected official where Sharpe James promised that he was going to only run one more term and then he was going to support Ron Rice for Mayor. We were at the, oh this place on central Ave, and we had rented it for that morning to have a meeting with all of the district leaders of West ward. And I remember standing next to John Smith and I mention his name because John will tell you about it. John was a police officer at the time and John said, "Ron is a fool if he believes that Sharpe is only going to run for one more term and then turn this over to him, Ron should run now and we in the ward was prepared to support Ron Rice as a mayor" and I believed that Ron Rice could have beaten Sharpe at that point and he let, I call fingoly Sharped spingolly him and spingolly the district leaders in the West ward to believe that he was going to run one time and that after that he turn it over to Ron and I can still seeing Ron standing next to Sharpe while Sharpe was spingolly him. I wasn't even in politics and I knew that Sharpe was spingolly him And I think that there may have been something like that may have happened with Donald Tucker and as these things go, there's is a timing and if you miss your timing in these kinds of things then its finished. I think something may have happened but they disliked each another hardly.

Robert Curvin

But the council is a real complicated

Maime Bridgeforth:

It is very complicated because each council person, you look at it in this regard. You have the 5-ward people and your focus mainly are the needs of your ward and making sure that things that need to be done to advance the life of the people in your ward is done. That's what you are elected to do, you are not elected to run all over the city. You are elected to definitely while looking at the needs of the city but be very procio in terms of what you must deliver for your constituents. So, we have that group then the ward council people have more of a camaraderie, if you will and more of a working relationship for example if there were things that I needed in my ward, I would go to my ward council colleagues and say you know this is what I am trying to doing in my ward and they understood it because they are in the ward so therefore, it will be highly unlikely you are going to get a ward council person against you because they know when their time comes and you want something in their ward, you would do it. So, if you can get your ward council people to give you five votes, you would not have to necessarily worry about the larger group. And I had an instance where we had something that was tabled and I think that's also troubled into the sort of rock between Gayle and I, we got past it because we were adult people because you know. We have a very decent, mutual relationship. I think she is a very fine person. But she had tabled something that had to do with my ward and I have problem with that but I

was trying to be cooperative and I said OKAY, if something is tabled what does that mean, it means it cannot come back unless the person that tables it brings it back. So, I went and had a discussion with her about it but her views about it was such that it was going to stay tabled while I subsequently did my research and I found out that the reason it was tabled didn't have something to do with my ward, but it had something to do with other stuffs that was important to her. So, my position was you are not going to hold my ward hostage just because of things you have going on. So, I proceeded to go to my council colleagues and ask them whether or not they would support me if in fact I asked them to put a motion on the floor so that I could override this tabling and have it brought back so it could go on the agenda. Well, it created quite a bit of a problem because it wasn't something that council people did, you just didn't do that kind of thing. But I made it very clear that I was going to do it and if she didn't bring it back, I would get it back and they felt that I was violating council prerogatives, you know you just don't do that kind of things

Robert Curvin So, there's kind of this unwritten agreement, or protocols

Maime Bridgeforth: Unwritten kinds of things, protocols and I was violating the protocol and I made it very clear. We had a meeting in Mayor Ras Baraka's office and I made it clear that I was going to violate the protocol, I had short of five votes, I've got five votes and this would come off the table because this is for my ward and I am not really interested in the fact that you got some kind of issue. But you've got into those kinds of things many times that sometimes it was very contentious between the council people but you try as best as you could to maintain the working relationships because when all is said and done, you need five votes to get your programme moved and so it became a difficult task sometimes and sometimes a little bit easier. But I think that's the nature of America's politics period because if you look at the Senate, and you look at what's going on in the Congress, you've got to deal with each other if you are going to move something. So, I think that the council, and of course there was the other part of the council too and I have to mention this, there was the inner circle and there was the outer circle. The inner circle could get with the mayor because they and the mayor had a good relationship, then the outer circle which I call the stepchild which was me ninety percent of the time. There would be meetings and something to do with the mayor, I was never invited. I would be treated like a nonentity. I remember the first time I was there, they tried to treat me like a nonentity but it didn't work.

Robert Curvin Was it the inner circle in a way that was allowed [] to run the development program the way he did?

Maime Bridgeforth [nods her head] [] run the development program the way he did because when I came on, it was myself and Ms. Cory and Amador [unclear], the

three of us came on and obviously to get up to speed with a lot of things it took a lot of time. There were other people who I call the inner court who were very knowledgeable for what was going on and so forth and so on. A lot of stuffs even if you were against it, you just didn't have the votes to stop them and that was a lot of the inner court.

Robert Curvin: How, it is just mind boggling to me that the city would allow itself to be used in a way like that. A man who had [unclear], and was also working for another city at the same time. Did the council ever talk about that? Were you aware?

Maime Bridgeforth: When I joined the council, and I said it took a while to speed things up and you begin to see that these kinds of things existed and you begin to raise questions about those types of things but Al-fael always had his five votes for his projects. You could be against something and you can stand up and vote against it but if the five votes are there, they are there. And what it took to get the five votes, it depended it may be that he was doing a project and this is way the ward issue comes along. If you are doing a project in my ward and that's going to benefit my people then perhaps the particular council person may not be critical to what Al [] was doing throughout the city elsewhere because if your constituent are looking for the fact that you have a block of a board of houses and all of a sudden all those board of houses have been knocked and you now have a new block of houses and new people coming. Your constituent is wow you are doing your job, I don't want to use divide and conquer, and that was the kind of thing that in many ways contributed to the critical analysis of what he was doing city wide.

Robert Curvin: So, everybody was gaining something?

Maime Broidgeforth: So, I think you can say it in that regard but not in terms of doing anything illegal. Now your ward was on the radar screen. For example, when I became council person, I had made a film, a videotape when I was running for election because that was the only way I could beat the Sharpe James machine that wasn't supporting because they supported[], and the only way was to make a video tape and to make with three thousand copies of it at night, putting it into people's mailboxes so that they can see what I saw in the ward and then they can be acquainted with who I was. because I couldn't find Sharpe in any other way and I had a tremendous information about how bad the ward was especially in areas outside of what was. So I had a pretty good idea of what existing and how many empty maps, and I put together a large map. When I went downstairs to the development office to meet with them because I wanted to find out what was on the development calendar for the west ward, nothing! Nothing was on the development calendar for west ward. I had to literally set up council meetings and you would hear me in the first term saying you know if there

are any developers out there that are interested in developing the west ward of Newark, would you please contact me council woman
Brisdgefprth, I personally took developers, got in a van, the city van and took them street by strrets of Westward and told them that's an empty lot, that's an empty lot you know you can develop west ward and so forth and so forth. I had developers who didn't even know how big westward was, they didn't realize that it started all the way from Park Avenue and ended all the way up to South Orange maple wood mine. They had no knowledge because the development office was not [] and that was rooted in the fight against Sharpe James and Ron Rice, you know that west ward was just dead territory.

Robert Curvin And one last quick question because we gat to go pick up our little kid uh, how do you feel about the way things are going about in the city

Maime Bridgeforth: Okay let me say this, if I had to give the mayor a grade, I would give him the grade of a C. I think that um he exhibited to me one of the flaws of youth. And if you look back in history, you see all youths behave in the same way. That most young people in the midst of their enthusiasm about having a change a chance to lead think they have all the answers. And I don't think they spend a lot of time trying to capitalize on the foundation that their elders may have provided and I think that his one of the biggest flaws. I think the second flaw of his leadership is that he is surrounded by too many people who have a vested interest to make him feel that he is the most wonderful thing since life spread. He is a decent person and I think he has decent goals and objectives but my point is that I think that he doesn't spend the time that he needs to spend connecting with Newark and that juxtaposition that gives the view somehow there was nothing new before he came. I personally think that has opened up a gulf between him an indigenous Newarkers. Now whether or not that has an implication on his long-term political career or not, I don't know. I just know that he just lost an opportunity that I will think and say we are going to the next chapter as a unified Newark. There was the Newark of the seed planter, there was the Newark of whether water of flooding and now there is the Newark of the future that rest on what these folks did. Some of what they did might not be the greatest but some of what they did has brought the city into a point where I can now take it to the next level, and I don't think it is that level of philosophy that is inherent in his leadership and for that reason, I think he has just missed a serious opportunity, just merch with the spirit of Newark. A lot of people have said that there is a change in the city and I don't think they are talking about administrative change. I believe they are talking about a change in the spirit of Newark. It doesn't have the same spirit anymore, it really doesntand I don't think that's good

Robert Curvin Thank you so much

Maime Bridgeforh: Okay